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THE
Commonweal

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by Robert Hovda

An American in Gaza

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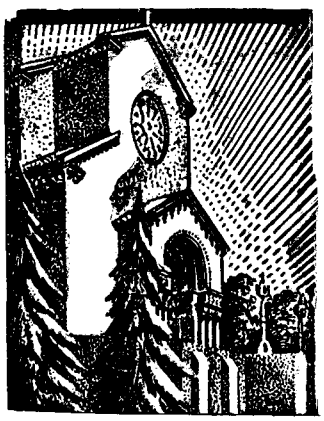

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THE COMMONWEAL
386 FOURTH AVENUE
NEW YORK

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Entered as second-class matter at the post office at Orange, Conn., under the act of March 3, 1879. Printed in the U.S.A. and published weekly, except biweekly during July and August, at 440 Post Road, Orange, Conn., by the Commonweal Publishing Co., Inc., 386 Fourth Ave., New York 16, N.Y. MUrray Hill 3-9685.

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U. S. and Canada, $8 a year. Foreign, $10. Single copies 25¢

Printed at the Wilson H. Lee Co., Orange, Conn.

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THE
Commonweal
A Weekly Review of Public Affairs, Literature, and the Arts
THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

week by week

A CHANGING COURT?

THE SUPREME COURT'S latest rulings have precipitated a great deal of commentary and discussion, as have many of its decisions in the past few years, but the most recent critiques are characterized by unusual caution and restraint.

Early decisions of the "Warren Court" in the broad area of individual and civil rights gave rise to the cry—either jubilant or anguished—that the Court had been "captured" by the "liberals." Conservatives in and out of Congress, including a committee of the American Bar Association, bitterly criticized these "liberal" decisions, and legislative efforts were made in both houses of Congress to "curb the Court"—to limit its jurisdiction and reverse some of its controversial rulings.

These efforts, which had met with varying degrees of success, were suddenly made to seem superfluous by a new series of "conservative" decisions by the Court. In these rulings, mostly concerning States' Rights and Constitutional limitations on Congressional investigations, the Supreme Court Justices seemed to have reversed their earlier stands. And so another cry went up—this time that the Court had been captured by the "conservatives."

Almost before the noise of this excitement had died down, the Court threw the analysts into fresh confusion by issuing additional rulings of an unmistakably "liberal" stamp. Thus the tortured reappraisals, in carefully moderate and tentative terms, now offered by pundits everywhere.

Current discussions of the Court begin by admitting that previous estimates of its dominant "mood" were much too extreme. Almost all of the controversial rulings were split-decisions, often decided by a single key vote. Furthermore, the differences between the Justices' judicial philosophies have also been exaggerated. It is true that the views of the Justices seem to range from extreme liberal to extreme conservative, but these are polar positions, with most of the Court's members falling into various positions somewhere in between.

WHAT HAS BEEN underestimated, on the other hand, is the large area of agreement to be perceived in all the opinions. For instance, while the Justices have divided, sometimes bitterly, on the powers of Congressional investigating committees, they have all agreed that the procedures followed by these committees must be carefully controlled so as not to infringe individual rights. And on the race question, most notably, the Court has maintained an impressive unanimity.

Even in those recent cases where the Court has strongly modified a previous "liberal" ruling, the new decision has frequently hinged on a rather narrow procedural or technical aspect of the case, not on the fundamental principles which are likely to be argued by Americans outside the legal profession.

That the Supreme Court should be made up of Justices who represent the whole spectrum of legal-political theory strikes us as not a bad thing at all. And that the decisions of the Court should depart from an inflexible ideological line, as its members examine particular questions about particular cases, also strikes us as not a bad thing.

This is not to say that we will refrain from comment approving or disapproving individual rulings made by the Court, or that we think others should refrain from such criticism. Some of the Court's recent decisions seem to us to have been wrong or dangerous in that they failed to consider certain possible implications or eventualities. We have grave misgivings, for instance, about the Palermo decision (the so-called "second Jencks case," which substantially modified the original decision), the

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Abbate and Bartkis cases (the rulings in support of double jeopardy prosecutions), the Frank v. Maryland decision (permitting health officials to enter homes without a warrant), and several others.

But our quarrels on these instances are with particular interpretations of the law, not with the Court as such. It is the privilege of those who disagree with a Supreme Court ruling to present their arguments, marshal their evidence and exert whatever pressure they can to support their views on the issue in question. Our governmental machinery provides adequately for this procedure, and through its operation our conflicting opinions may be tested, argued and equitably resolved—until such time as a fresh argument or new evidence is brought forth to reopen the controversy.

We cannot claim that this process guarantees infallibility, but it is reasonable, fair and has been remarkably successful. Denouncing the Court is not a useful substitute.

TRUTH, PEACE AND UNITY

THE FIRST encyclical of Pope John XXIII, "Ad Petri Cathedram," developed those themes which have so frequently appeared in his previous public statements. He spoke of the great, the overwhelming need which our present world has for truth, peace and unity.

The tendency toward falsehood and immorality, which he said was spreading, can only be halted by determined efforts. In these efforts the press, movies and television, major forces in modern communication, play a major role. Their responsibility to see that the truth is not distorted, that the large audiences which these media command are not misled, is a grave burden.

Pope John spoke too of peace and of the terrible alternatives to peace which men face today. "For, if—which God prevent—a new war broke out, nothing else will await or confront all peoples (such are the dreadful armaments which our age brings into play), but appalling destruction and ruin; and this whether they are victor or vanquished." Every approach which may lead to essential unity and harmony must, therefore, be tried. This harmony can be achieved, asserted Pope John, "only when minds are at peace and the rights of all recognized, and due freedom shines forth for the Church, for peoples, and for the individual citizen."

The Pope spoke again of unity when he stressed the objectives of the forthcoming ecumenical council. "The council's chief business will concern the increase of the Catholic Church," he said, "and the renewal along right lines of the habits of Christian people and the adapting of ecclesiastical discipline to the masses and conditions of the present time."

Thus the Pope elaborated on the concerns to which he has devoted so much of his time and attention as John XXIII, those large, overarching concerns from which no man today is wholly exempt. It would be foolhardy, of course, to expect that Pope John's first encyclical will have any immediate, obvious effects. But it is heartening to see the Pope, in a strong and moving document, direct the world's attention to those paths which must be followed if the holocaust is to be avoided. It is further heartening to realize that those are the paths on which Pope John intends to push ahead in the years immediately before us.

Commonweal Survey

Some weeks ago thousands of questionnaires were mailed out to a representative cross-section of our subscribers, and replies are now being received in good numbers. We urge those who still intend to return the survey questionnaire to do so soon, and we thank those who have already responded, particularly those who gave us their comments and suggestions on the magazine. We are most grateful. THE EDITORS.

"OFFICIAL" AMERICAN ART

IN THE CONTROVERSY over the American paintings to be exhibited in Moscow, the issue is not whether President Eisenhower, Congressman Walter of the House Un-American Activities Committee, or the editors of this magazine like the selections. Mr. Eisenhower was quite right in deciding that he would not set himself up as censor of the paintings chosen by the committee of experts; it is too bad he did not stop there instead of going on to question the method by which the committee itself was selected. If future committees are made up of men who know "what America likes," in the President's phrase, U.S. exhibits abroad might not consist largely of framed covers from the *Saturday Evening Post*, as some have suggested, but our entries probably would be as undistinguished as "official" Soviet art which has to hew to the line of "Socialist realism."

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The committee which chose the American paintings for showing in Moscow was a competent one, made up of museum officials and university personnel of considerable stature in the world of art. No selection made by them or any other committee could satisfy everyone. The important decision they made, however, was to do the choosing purely on the basis of artistic merit and without regard to politics. In this the committee members were, we think, quite right; the danger of imposing political standards on works of art should be obvious.

If President Eisenhower was "correct" in his negative criticism of a portrayal of a U.S. major general—something which is by no means certain—its inclusion in the Moscow exhibition spoke volumes about the freedom that is a fact in the United States. As such, it offered a striking contrast to the treatment given Boris Pasternak and his *Dr. Zhivago* by the Soviet Union. Now, unfortunately, much of the moral of that lesson on freedom has been obscured by those like Congressmen Walter who want political purity tests to be administered to any artist before his work can be sent abroad. It is ironic that the somber lesson of Pasternak has now been ignored, not by the Russians but by Americans who seem to know as little about the great war of ideas that is going on in the world as they do about art.

BRINKMANSHIP IN STEEL

PRESIDENT EISENHOWER does not consider the present labor-management deadlock in steel as a "national emergency" in the Taft-Hartley meaning of that phrase, but he is obviously concerned with the effect a strike could have on the national economy and the common good. For weeks it has been reported that high Administration officials, including Vice President Nixon and Secretary of Labor Mitchell, have been active behind the scenes in an effort to find a solution acceptable to both sides, even though the federal government has not officially intervened in the dispute. And the negotiations continued beyond the original strike deadline only as a result of Mr. Eisenhower's exhortation that both sides "continue to bargain without interruption of production until all the terms and conditions of a new contract are agreed upon."

We share the President's concern. Indeed, we are quite surprised at the equanimity with which some commentators seem to view the prospect of a nation-wide strike, just when the economy really seems to be heading upward from the 1958 slump. And we think the public is at this point entitled to ask for some display of statesmanship by management as well as labor.

Significantly, sharp criticism of management's conduct of the current negotiations was recently expressed by *Iron Age,* an influential trade magazine which reflects the views of part of the steel industry itself. This year, said *Iron Age,* the major steel companies are determined to "make up quickly what has been bargained away in the past eighteen years." This effort to withdraw concessions previously won by the union over many years represents an exercise in industrial "brinkmanship," the magazine warned, and the results are likely to be "labor troubles galore" in the months and years immediately ahead.

Enough information is available about the progress of the steel negotiations to indicate that *Iron Age* is hardly exaggerating. The union is not in the strongest position in the world. One hundred thousand jobs have been eliminated by automation, and more will be. Rank-and-file sentiment for a strike is not strong, although a strike call will undoubtedly be honored if it comes. Management officials, on the other hand, seem much more unconcerned about the prospect of a strike—perhaps because advance buying of steel has put them in a very strong position, as indicated by profit figures for the early part of 1959 as compared with 1958. First-quarter profits of U.S. Steel, for example, were well over one hundred million, as compared with sixty-two million last year; Bethlehem doubled last year's twenty-four million; and Republic profits went from eight to twenty-six million.

The union says wages and benefits can be increased out of current high profits without any rise in prices. Management wants the union to accept the status quo without any increases in wages or fringe benefits; in addition, it wants the union to accept important changes in working agreements and in the provision for a cost-of-living escalator won in previous years. Since these management demands would involve substantial losses, it is hard to believe that management really expects union officials to accept them. When these facts are coupled with management's refusal to continue bargaining with all contract changes to be retroactive to the original deadline, the conclusions drawn by union officials must be clear: their choice is unconditional surrender or strike.

Like *Iron Age,* we think that in these negotiations steel management is making a serious mis-

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take which will have costly consequences for the nation and, in the years ahead, for the steel industry itself. The haste with which the union seized upon President Eisenhower's face-saving proposal that bargaining be continued indicates how little taste the union has for a strike. If the issue is strike or surrender, we do not doubt that the men will strike. But the issue need not and should not be put in such stark terms for either side.

If "holding the line" on prices and wages is so crucial, management could show the way by a declaration that capital will also cooperate by foregoing any increase in return on investment and that all profits over the average of the last three years will be turned instead into lower prices for steel. Such a policy would improve steel's competitive position in relationship to foreign imports and alternative domestic products, and it would represent an anti-inflationary step that both steel workers and the public could understand.

A BOOK IS A BOOK IS A—WHAT?

WHEN IS A book not a book? The question occurred to us, we must admit, only after we had read in *Publishers' Weekly* a report on a recent meeting of the American Booksellers Association. As booksellers the members of the association are, of course, interested in books. And, as booksellers, they are also, of course, interested in selling. One panel discussion brought these two interests together in a manner which, if not novel, nevertheless held some surprises for us.

The topic of the panel was "Books and Culture as Status Symbols," and the first speaker to address the group was more than adequate to his subject. Vance Packard, author of the best-selling *The Status Seekers,* not only criticized the book trade for some of its practices but offered corrective advice. According to Mr. Packard, even those who regularly buy books do so not only for knowledge, pleasure and inspiration but because, subconsciously, they are aware that "books are seen as status symbols." Most buyers, said Mr. Packard, think of how a book will look lying casually in the living room. But the status of books, he suggested, is insecure. To maintain the present high status of books, Mr. Packard said, the book industry should cooperate with home builders and decorators to give the modern home a literate air; the industry should dramatize the fact that today widely esteemed people read many books; it should encourage store displays built around a local "Book Enthusiast of the Month."

Mr. Charles Anderson, president of the A.B.A. and owner of a bookstore, continued the theme of status and books. He was not only able to place bookstores according to a "status-quotient" but told the group that "as booksellers we can exploit the status urge, as the merchants of other products do, and still retain our professional integrity. We can in all conscience extol the merits of a good book that is chiefly bought for status purposes and is seldom read, like *Dr. Zhivago.* There is always the hope or the chance that it will get read. Of all the objects and products that are status-symbols there is none more worthy or more dignified than a book."

"It is also highly advisable," Mr. Anderson went on, "for any bookstore to exploit the status-urge to charge everything and to set up a charge system of its own."

After listening to author and bookseller the group heard publisher Simon Michael Bessie of Atheneum Publishers. Acknowledging that the manner in which a publisher "packages and publicizes" a book will affect its status, he said that he felt the "producers of records and hi-fi equipment have done a better job in recent years in augmenting the status-symbolism of their products than we have done with books." But he also had positive suggestions as well as criticism. It would be a good idea, said Mr. Bessie, if "our legal housing standards included a modest provision for bookshelves alongside the regulations requiring flushing toilets and safe wiring. The books you put on those bookshelves might be thought of as the plumbing and wiring of the future."

After reading the accounts of these addresses we feel highly uncertain about the answer to our initial question, but as book-enthusiasts from way back we decided to quit worrying about it, give in to a status-urge, go off to a status-symbol store, and buy some "plumbing and wiring of the future" to place casually around the living room—that is, if the product is attractively packaged and we can charge it.

Summer Schedule

In keeping with the practice of many magazines, The Commonweal is appearing on alternate weeks during July and August. Forthcoming issues will be dated July 31, August 14, and August 28. The normal weekly schedule will be resumed in September. Subscriptions will be automatically extended for four issues.

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The Death Penalty

How compelling to the Christian conscience are the traditional arguments for the death penalty?

by ROBERT HOVDA

THERE IS A strong suspicion abroad that, when it comes to moral questions, Catholics are brave and forthright and conscientiously insistent only in the area of private and personal problems. Institutions (except Communism) and public life seem to frighten us and we are silent victims of the status quo.

We Catholics have said, of course, on innumerable occasions, that the leadership of most of the public questions of conscience has been so identified with an ideology foreign to the Gospel that we could not go along except at a distance of several paces (behind). And it is true enough that many of the socialist and pacifist and civil liberties and anti-segregation leaders have been creatures of their times—not so damning an indictment when one stops to think. But this cannot be an excuse for Catholics' having failed to assume leadership in these basically moral challenges. It explains only the relative distances at which our consciences have trailed.

A more convincing explanation is that many of us are guilty of distorting in our minds the true nature of the Church. Many of us have traded Christian freedom and responsibility for a relieving clericalism. That way we have to do only what the priest says we have to do. And since the average priest, contrary to some opinions, would rather die than introduce into the pulpit anything that could be regarded as politics, we are left with a morality about as private as it can get.

Take the presumably "indifferent" matter of capital punishment. We are surprised when we read that in Boston a prelate appeared to testify for the retention of capital punishment and in Chicago another bishop is heading a committee for the abolition of capital punishment. These facts need not, of course, dismay us; but they should engender some long, hard thoughts.

Capital punishment has already been abolished in all of the Western European democracies save France, and in virtually the whole of Central and South America. Eight of our own States have followed suit. Obviously, there are reasons for this wholesale rejection of a time-honored institution. But how cogent are these reasons? How compelling are they to the Christian conscience?

CERTAINLY reverence for life heads the arguments for abolition. Reverence for life as the Christian's sluggish awareness that when he confronts another man or woman he confronts Christ, the Son of Man, the second Adam. Reverence for life as the intuition that we are not so isolated from one another's guilt or goodness that we have a right to cut these mortal ties. Reverence for life as the understanding that, since each of us is invited to share, for all eternity, the life and happiness of the Holy Trinity, this life is more, not less, sacred and crucial and important.

This mortal span is all the time we have for choice. And it is much too easy to say that, knowing the time of his death, the prisoner has ample opportunity to prepare. A state of shock is not fertile ground for faith. Nor can the external pressures of death row, whatever happy urgency their advocates find in them, be conceived as encouraging the dispositions necessary for a fruitful reception of the sacraments. Those who advance this argument suffer from a view of the holy signs that is as outdated as it is mechanical.

It has been termed "sentimentalism," I know, to broach with awe and sense of mystery this reverence for life. But deciding on the end of a human life is not to be placed in the same category as a decision regarding a hymn for Vespers. The word "sentimentalism" might be appropriate in the latter case; it is not in the former. And I have never heard it used when a Christian evidences genuine concern for the life of an unborn infant or recoils from the prospect of suicide.

The point is not, of course, reverence for life-that-is-just, for life-like-ours, for unimpeachable life. "Do

Father Hovda is a priest of the Fargo, North Dakota diocese who has previously written for The Commonweal.

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not even the publicans do as much?" It is reverence for the life of the woman found in adultery, for the life of the thief on the cross, for distorted, wounded, perverted, weak human life.

Hope of correction is another argument against capital punishment. And this should be a wellspring for a total reform of penal institutions as well as for this particular cause. In their book *The Offenders,* Giles Playfair and Derrick Sington write: "This experiment [the Van der Hoeven Clinic at Utrecht, where abnormal offenders are treated under essentially non-punitive conditions] has given grounds for optimism over the possibility of curing many types of abnormal or recidivist offenders, including murderers and potential murderers. . . . Moreover, to the argument that such experiments place too heavy a financial burden on the community it may be replied that a mentally abnormal offender, cured and restored to the free world after four years of treatment at the Utrecht Clinic, has cost society, at $7 a day, $10,200. State expenditure in Holland on a lifelong criminal is about $28,000, leaving out of account the damage he causes while at large."

The Christian surely can be excused for looking at the Gospel in this connection, too. Though the death penalty, like polygamy and a rather reserved attitude toward one's enemies, was tolerated in the Old Testament, one finds no text to support a lack of hope for correction, where human beings are involved. Instead, all is confidence in the saving power of God's grace.

ANOTHER of the important arguments for the abolition of capital punishment is the fallibility of human justice. This is an argument independent of both the Christian's reverence for life and the psychologist's affirmation of hope. Playfair and Sington, in the book mentioned above, report that: "Between 1930 and 1954 Southern Negroes accounted for no less than 335 of the 382 executions for rape that took place throughout the United States." Of the 155 executions in 1930, Thorsten Sellin makes this stark observation: "Little is known of those executed. They were mostly Negroes and immigrants." The late Warden Lawes of Sing Sing states flatly: "The defendant of wealth and position never goes to the electric chair or to the gallows."

Comments like these should remind us all how dangerous the "men of principle" can be. Let some men find a principle, and no existential fact, no human face or life or heart, will swerve them from their course. Is there any hope that a documented book like Arthur Koestler's *Reflections on Hanging* will penetrate their world of essences?

That capital punishment is not a deterrent from crime is purely a matter of statistics, not principles. For statistical comparisons of certain areas before and after the abolition of capital punishment, as well as of death-penalty and non-death-penalty areas during the same time periods, utterly fail to prove any deterrent effect in the types of crimes involved.

Is, then, our primary purpose in the apprehension of the criminal a punishment that is solely vindictive and retributive? "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord." And, on the other hand, "As soon as you eat this fruit your eyes will be opened, and you yourselves will be like gods, knowing good and evil." In this day, with experience and understanding which invalidate any claim to invincible ignorance, dare we continue to support a form of punishment from which is excluded all hope of correction, all purpose of reform, all healing?

WHAT IS the Christian's valid aim in the legal processes of the state? Can it be more than a feeble approximation of justice? Can it be less than an overriding concern that the punitive instruments of the state be converted to correction and healing?

Flights of homiletic poetry have at times referred to the Church as the "conscience of mankind." But like many other homiletic flights this one is both inaccurate and misleading. Conscience is a more singular faculty than this. And in any case it is a notion alien to the Church. It is not the function of the Church to be the conscience of mankind, should such a thing exist. Rather, the Church *is* mankind, in its spiritual dimension.

But the Word of God, taught with authority by the Church's magisterium, preached by her bishops and priests, deserves the attention of mankind and should inform the consciences of men. The Holy Spirit, whose ark (but not prison) on earth the Church is, leads us into all truth. So that, although certain hypocritical charges can be dismissed, we do have a right to expect a living prophetic tradition *within the Church* to be a constant gadfly to the human conscience. We do have a right to expect the people of the Church, hierarchy and lay, not to be surprised at the evolution of morals of which she (because of the Word that is in her) is the cause.

Catholics today have an inescapable obligation to speak out—on the morality of capital punishment and on all such social problems. They are obliged to speak and to act, not in order to stifle the opposition or to silence criticism but rather to rescue a vital Christian function, which is as much threatened by clericalism as by any other misunderstanding of the Church's nature.

I refer, of course, to the Christian function of prophecy. Or, more broadly, the function of the Christian as gadfly, as one who seeks, in his human life and moral judgments, ever to become more sensitive to the demands—and even the discreet invitations—which are part of the redemptive Word.

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It is part of the job to recognize early warning signals

An American in Gaza

by JAMES D. PICTON

GAMAL ABDEL NASSER'S recent attacks on Middle East Communists sounded here in the Gaza Strip like the distant rumble of thunder on a hot summer night. The attacks seemed forewarnings of a political storm that was about to break. And when it hit us in Gaza, I was sure, it would come in typical Arab fashion: street riots and frantic demonstrations.

It is almost part of the job for an American working in the Middle East to recognize these early warning signals. This is particularly so if, like me, you work for an organization like CARE that does most of its work in remote rural areas where the restraints of the police and of political maturity are not very effective.

My present CARE posting is in the Gaza Strip, a twenty-five by five-mile strip of land between Israel and the Mediterranean Sea, where more than three hundred thousand Palestinian Arabs live disgruntled lives on doles from the U.N., the Egyptian government, CARE, and other groups. Two hundred and fifteen thousand of these people, moreover, are refugees who were uprooted from their homes in Palestine by the Arab-Israeli war and never permitted to return.

These people have, for eleven years, been eager followers of every rabble rouser and politician who came along. And there has never been any dearth of these. Communists, in the past, have usually led the demonstrations in Gaza, and I didn't know quite what to expect when the Communists themselves were labelled the enemies of Arab nationalism.

A Gaza schoolmaster got things underway by calling his pupils together and telling them, "The headmaster of Zeitoun School is a Communist." Forming a crowd of two or three hundred, the students marched on Zeitoun School and its headmaster Kamal Taweel. Taweel, which means "long" in Arabic, doesn't describe Zeitoun's headmaster at all. He is, in fact, short, fat and jovial.

"Say 'Long live Nasser,' " demanded the school boys of the headmaster, after bringing him out in front of his school. "Long live Nasser," he replied. "Say 'Down with Kassim of Iraq.' " "Down with Kassim of Iraq." "Say 'Down with Communism.' " "Down with Communism. . . ."

That was quite a disappointing performance for the crowd. But there was still Bisayso, head of the Salahdin School, and one of Gaza's best known Communists. "Say, 'Long live Nasser,' " the crowd of boys began again. Bisayso had been saying that for years and it was easy for him to make the expected reply. But when the crowd demanded that he say "Down with Communism," Bisayso paused and rubbed the cuff of his jacket across his lips. Then he began, "Free people of Palestine. . . ." "Down with Communism," yelled someone, and "Down with Communism," echoed the throng. "Up with Nasser. Down with Kassim. Down with Communism. . . ."

BECAUSE THE POLICE were there, Bisayso was able to get away safely, and the crowd of fourteen-year-olds went happily down the street, increasing their following as they went like a snowball rolling down a hill. They were quite a mob by the time they reached Gaza's main street, where, chanting and waving their hands, they brought all traffic to a standstill. Shopkeepers rolled down the heavy steel riot doors that have become standard equipment in Middle Eastern shopping districts. Fruit vendors hastily collected their produce and headed for cover. Taxi-drivers hid their cars and housewives hurried down side streets toward home.

Then, when everyone was expecting the worst, the yelling stopped and there was no mob at all. It was gone like a spring thunder shower. Merchants reappeared with their goods and the heavy steel doors slid open again with a roar and a bang. Housewives reappeared and traffic again filled the street.

The police, it seems, had clamped down. "There will be no demonstration today," decreed the Governor General. "But at the right time we will all demonstrate and everyone will have to take part."

The time set for the official demonstration was forty-eight hours later. In the meantime, however, the Communists were not given much peace. Bisayso's fiancée, for instance, a teacher and also a Communist, was

Mr. Picton has for years lived and worked in the Middle East. This is his third appearance in The Commonweal.

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asked to shout "Down with Communism," and when she refused her students—girls—pulled her hair and clothing and slapped her face as well.

The morning of the demonstration was clear and bright. Troops in battle dress surrounded the Governor's office at fifty-foot intervals, and along the main street more troops with helmets and guns were posted. At Gaza's government house and at UNEF headquarters extra troops were stationed, and UNEF even had Swedish police dogs ready for trouble.

The demonstrators all gathered by the railway station at one end of Gaza's long, straight main street. All, that is, except school girls who were kept separate until the parade began. Morality, after all, takes precedence even over politics. The girls pinned big pictures of Nasser on their blouses, covering their chests or their backs. Some had his picture on both sides, and a few even had him on the seat of their dresses. They waved Nasser's picture aloft as they walked by and giggled shyly: "Neither Communism nor imperialism."

The marchers were mostly school children. Like children anywhere, they enjoy any excuse to skip classes, especially for a game like politics. Their teachers weren't so happy, however. If they didn't show up for the demonstration against Communism that morning they ran the risk of being labelled Communists and having their hair pulled and their faces slapped—or worse—by their politically conscious pupils. Bisayso's relatives, for example, felt a special obligation to march with the children. "Peace—Peace—Peace—Peace," shouted a group of twelve-year-olds. The next group had a sign in English that read: "No Peace without Repatriation." A third group, following the leadership of a red-faced boy with a straggly black moustache, shouted: "Death to Kassim. Cut his hands." Up the street another group was carrying a blackboard that had a cartoon chalked on it. Khrushchev had a leash in his hand that was tied around the neck of a jackass whose face resembled Iraq's Kassim. The Iraqui leader was being led by his master, Nikita Harrachouf (local pronunciation).

FROM THE railway station the procession went through the shopping district, past Gaza's new movie house (Victory Cinema), past UNEF headquarters where the Swedes and their dogs watched nervously, and then past the CARE office before it finally entered the expansive "Square of Martyrs." The Square is right in front of Gaza's House of Commons, which is also the Egyptian Governor General's office. A statue stands in the middle of the grassy square in memorial to the Unknown Soldier of Gaza. It is made of white marble and carries a sub-machine gun with its ghastly white finger pointing ominously eastward toward the Israeli border.

I made my way to the Square by Gaza's maze-like back alleys in order to avoid the mobs in the main street. Several Egyptian army officers were standing about the base of the Unknown Soldier's statue when I reached it. As the procession filled the Square, the speeches began, and every group in the community had to have its say. Teachers were under special obligation to have their voices heard that day. With the possible exception of lawyers, teachers have always produced most of the Middle East's Communists, and many of the teachers were eager to set their reputations straight before the town, especially before their demonstrating students.

One young man popped up at every pause and shouted, "No Communism in the Department of Education" and "No Communism in the Schools." Both of these are mouthfuls, especially in Arabic, but his enunciation was flawless. Headmaster Taweel was present, too, and even though he is a Christian, he carried aloft not one Moslem Koran, but two. In Martyr's Square, that day, the students were looking for a martyr to Communism, and Taweel wasn't volunteering.

Amid the shouting and emotion, it was surprising to see one group standing quietly in the rear. They were the boys of Gaza's only orphanage, Hope (for return to Palestine) Institute. The orphanage is run by a gray-haired, fatherly man namel Serraj, who was once a sergeant in the British police of Palestine. Serraj's concept of cleanliness and discipline is truely unique in the Middle East, and his qualities never fail to appear at demonstrations like these. Though Serraj's ten- and twelve-year-olds stood quietly by while the others chanted and flung their arms in the air, their message rang out loud and clear. Throughout the whole ceremony they stood motionless in their clean khaki shorts and shirts. In their hands, that never moved from high above their heads, they held the Koran, the Holy Book of Islam.

Meanwhile, the crowd was getting bigger, and it began to press more tightly toward the statue. The specter of the mob killings in Iraq loomed in my mind, as did the thought of other Middle East riots, but I didn't worry too much about the crowds because there were about ten Egyptian army colonels not twenty-five feet away from me. I was even a bit exhilirated by my adventure. I could leave the worrying about my safety to the colonels, I felt, because I knew they would never let anything happen to me . . . as long as they were able to prevent it.

THE INTERNAL SECURITY Director, Colonel Hemeda, had finished his furious speech by then and a line of school children—ten-year-olds, I judged—were going to the microphone to flail away at Communism and imperialism. Arabs always feel their point

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of view gains strength if children hold the same view grownups do and express their convictions with outward displays of emotions. "If simple children can accept this, it must be true," seems to be the theory. The children, on their part, win love and recognition by reciting political poetry or by leading chants against the enemies of Arab nationalism. Boy Scouts, for example, are always important parts of Middle East political demonstrations.

Another thing Arabs like to do is harness the animal world for propaganda purposes. Dali's white peace dove is well suited for this purpose, so long as Dali doesn't mind pigeons being used as a substitute for doves. Dag Hammarskjold was given an illustration of this Arab idiosyncrasy when he visited Gaza last Christmas, in the form of a big box that was tied in ribbons and wrapped in paper of many splendid colors. The box was addressed, "To Mr. Hammarskjold, from the peace-loving people of Gaza." When Mr. Hammarskjold opened the box, a flock of white doves—that is, pigeons—fluttered out and began excitedly flapping their wings over the heads of the assembled guests, who by this time, were vigorously clapping their hands in recognition of Arab genius.

The animal kingdom was again represented at the anti-Communist demonstration in the Square of Martyrs, but this time more disrespectfully. A shaggy mongrel was picked up by the schoolboys and decorated with a piece of white cloth that had "Kassim" written on it. Dogs, by the way, are held in great contempt in the Arab world. The dog was understandably frightened by all this and was showing frequent signs of his nervousness in the way dogs do. The boys, who didn't seem to mind the rain, thought it was a good joke on Kassim and held the poor beast high in the air for everyone to get a good look.

Meanwhile, however, less amusing things were happening behind me. The boys with the big cartoon of Kassem in the guise of a jackass being led by Khrushchev were not standing idly in the square. They pushed through the crowd until they were right behind me, waving their placard over my head. The colonels seemed to be getting worried about me—I was getting worried myself—and they sent a strapping special policeman with a red cap to reinforce the little soldier who was pushing and shoving behind me in order to keep my place relatively clear.

THEN, SUDDENLY, when the last schoolgirl had had her fling at Kassem and the Communists, the crowd of officers left the statue and disappeared in less time than it takes to tell. Within a few seconds the army was gone and in its place was only the mob, with me packed immovably in the middle. The boys with the sign began waving it more vigorously, and there were shouts and mutters, at me and about me. The special policeman beside me looked worried and it was very clear that the best thing to do at that moment was to get out of there—and fast. But we were packed into the very center of the mob, and the nearest clear patch was about three hundred feet away. The only way to get out was to start pushing and that in itself might have started things off. I could just hear them saying, "And we don't want imperialists either." (That would be me, of course—an imperialist.)

I did my best to keep calm, which, I am sure, wasn't very good. The special policeman seemed to be getting a little desperate as more and more of the crowd began jostling us. I said to him then, loudly, in my most nonchalant voice, "Well, I guess we might as well be running along." And I whispered in his ear the Arabic equivalent of "Let's get the hell out of here."

He started pushing a way out through the crowd, and I tossed "Peace be unto you" in Arabic this way and that, and hoped the feeling was mutual. The toughs made a few comments I didn't understand, but they grudgingly opened the way for us, which at that stage was all that mattered to me. The crowd barrier was broken, and we made our way out of the packed human center of the mob without the spark having been struck.

And then it was all over. The excitement of the demonstration was already wearing off. A long day of fasting lay ahead of the Arab crowd, for it was Ramadan, the month when Moslems neither eat nor drink from dawn to dusk. The aimlessness and boredom that are Gaza's perennial condition gradually returned as the refugees turned tiredly toward their camps. Their emotional purgative was over.

I breathed a deep sigh of relief for my own safety when I got out of the crowd. But what of these refugees, I thought, as I looked back at them. Three hundred and fifteen thousand people and more, here in this narrow Gaza Strip that is only half fertile anyway. The most advanced and most educated people in the Arab World, reduced to frantic demonstrations and frantic, futile speeches. And to whom? To themselves mostly, to a few United Nations people, and to me, a lone American representing CARE.

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THE SCREEN

NUNS FRET NOT

NO DOUBT many a nun before and after Wordsworth fretted at her "convent's narrow room." "The Nun's Story" tells of such a nun. Although it never makes clear what prompted Gabrielle Van der Mal to enter a strict order in Belgium, the movie is done with great beauty and reverence. It tells a fascinating tale of a dedicated woman who wanted above all to be a nurse in the Congo. She wanted to devote herself to mankind and to God—but on her own terms.

Robert Anderson has written an excellent script from Kathryn Hulme's semi-biographical book. He has wisely omitted some details and episodes, but essentially he follows Miss Hulme's novel, and his screenplay, often somber and grim, is also sensitive and extremely touching. Henry Blanke has given his picture a first-rate production with an outstanding cast, Franz Planer's stunning Technicolor photography, and settings, such as those of the convent interiors and the Belgian Congo, of extraordinary beauty. But the film, if it belongs to anyone, belongs to Fred Zinnemann. His direction is superb and his handling of the large cast in the lengthy story is masterful. Again and again Zinnemann has proved himself—in such thoughtful pictures as "The Search," "The Men," and "High Noon"—but "The Nun's Story," with its demanding themes, is his greatest achievement.

Furthermore, Zinnemann has guided Audrey Hepburn, in the difficult role of Sister Luke, in her best performance to date. Sister Luke both attracts and repels; and Miss Hepburn portrays the nun's struggles and conflicts with a depth and understanding she has never previously displayed. She is greatly aided by the effective convent and hospital scenes showing her training as a postulant, novice, medical student and, finally, as nursing nun. But Miss Hepburn herself brings much to the role. Sister Luke is still struggling to learn obedience, interior silence, humility and, most of all, charity (which she cannot feel toward the Germans in World War II) when she is released from her vows and leaves the convent, but she has been revealed as a stirring if not a winning character. No one gloats at another's failure—and leaving the convent is failure for Gabrielle.

If the film itself fails in any department it is in conveying the joys and happiness of the religious. But whatever the failings of "The Nun's Story," they are not due to its cast. Outstanding is Dame Edith Evans as the Superior General, the imposing, wise, good Mother Emmanuel. Also impressive as nuns are Mildred Dunnock, Dame Peggy Ashcroft, Patricia Collinge, Beatrice Straight, Rosalie Crutchley and others. The two leading male roles are well played by Peter Finch as the agnostic doctor in Africa who predicts that Sister Luke will never be a perfect nun in this Order, and Dean Jagger, as Gabrielle's devoted father who hopes for her happiness. "The Nun's Story" is a thoroughly absorbing film and often inspiring. Its tale of a woman who wanted to be a nurse first and a nun second and probably didn't really have a vocation is quite touching. One thing it makes clear: to be a nun is not an easy task.

THOSE who prefer to see Catholicism portrayed on the screen in more blue-birdy style may like "Say One for Me," which is a sort of sleazy "Going My Way." Bing Crosby, again playing a priest, tries to help Debbie Reynolds, a young dancer who foolishly falls in love with Robert Wagner, a no-good cad who finally mends his way under the influence of Debbie and Father Crosby. Most of this is schmaltz decorated with song-and-dance numbers, some of which are quite entertaining and some in quite dubious taste. Outstanding in the supporting cast is Ray Walston as an alcoholic songwriter straightened out by Bing. There could very well be material for a movie among the attendants at the actors' chapel, but "Say One for Me" is very, very tired. PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

MARIA ANGELICA

(Excerpt from a missionary's letter)

"Maria Angelica is twelve. For a long time her mother knew the little girl had leprosy but she tried to keep it hidden, in horror of the day her daughter would be sent to the public leprosy camp.

"Last September neighbors insisted Maria be sent away. But because the leprosy camp is dreaded by all, Father X arranged to have the child enter the poor little leprosy colony we conduct here for Bishop Y.

"Maria screamed with terror when she first met the other victims of leprosy here. Actually they've been kindness itself to her. They remember what it was like for themselves in the beginning, before they found out that leprosy is curable . . ."

CMMB helps missionaries care for thousands of children like Maria Angelica, suffering from leprosy and many other diseases.

Please help us. Send whatever you can to

Rev. Edward F. Garesché, S.J., Pres.

The Catholic Medical Mission Board

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FRONTIER IN FRESNO

THE CITY of Fresno does not seem, offhand, the first place to expect a new and vigorous development in Catholic book publishing. But any commercial atlas will show that Fresno, in the rich Central Valley of California, commands a strategic postition where the positive force and initiative of capable individuals (rare any place) can work without unreasonable handicaps, and with ready channels of influence through California and all the West.

The publishing enterprise is the Academy Library Guild, started very modestly ten years ago, and reorganized at the turn of this year with expansion plans which involve publishing at least eighteen books before Christmas, and distributing a thousand others. Monsignor James H. Culleton, chancellor of the diocese of Monterey-Fresno, supplied the rare personal force and initiative that created the business and gave it momentum. He has now formed it into a producers' cooperative, about the only cooperative publishing house there is; merged into it the small but interesting firm of Coley Taylor, Inc.; and brought in as managing director an experienced professional writer and editor, Donald Demarest, of New Orleans, New York, Mexico City, and now Fresno.

The first requirement in the desperate job of publishing is a powerful affirmation of the value of books. Monsignor Culleton made this affirmation and in no Platonic or passive way. His first commitment was to the book *The Phophets of Our Times,* written by his own brother, Father Gerald Culleton, who died before it could be printed. Monsignor Culleton got the book locally printed and then sold it through the few Catholic outlets up and down the State and directly to individual readers. The first edition sold out. Gradually, over 12,500 copies were sold. He was in business.

As the Academy Library Guild developed, it was a double-branched book enterprise: a distributor and a publisher. Book lists of over 1,000 titles were sent through reaches of the Midwest, Far West, and Deep South. The scientifically maintained mailing list of the Academy numbers more than 13,000 active addresses. Most of the books were specially purchased and offered at drastically low prices. Overhead was reduced by brilliant improvisation and by recruiting part-time and handicapped, but thoroughly capable, help. A new edition of six to eight hundred could cover costs!

As the business became established, long-run considerations indicated certain changes, or developments. It was not always possible, or suitable for continued steady growth, to keep up some of the emergency measures. A proper impatience to get books read had to be reconciled with consideration for the economic stability and the best standards and traditions of the book publishing and selling industry. The initiative shown in Fresno, the stimulation of the western literary market, the formation of a new Catholic book company, and the cooperative organization of the company make an interesting and useful story. But the content of the books will be the main matter.

Special regional interest is meant to be promoted in a branch of the Guild named the "Academy of California Church History." Under this imprint, in addition to books, an annual, *Scrapbook,* is published, and a quarterly, *California Yesterdays,* has been started. A hard-core first market of about eight hundred for almost any decent "Californiana" awaits publications along these lines. The Spanish books of *Editorial Catolica* of Madrid give a bread-and-butter business to the Guild, serving the almost inexplicably neglected Spanish language families of the area and the seminaries, schools and libraries which need Spanish books. Books in Portuguese, Italian and other languages are also imported. Very promisingly, the Academy Library Guild has begun publishing for some of the West Coast Catholic colleges and universities in the lively world of the University Presses. Translations of Catullus and Aristotle undertaken at St. Mary's College of California are leading off in this field.

In the general list, the Catholic books are meant to be, also, as small "c" catholic as possible. The aim is not regional, nor necessarily pious or even devotional, but universal. Some are not "religious" books at all. Nevertheless, the West-of-the-Hudson position of the firm and the out-of-town experience of the publishers are apparent. Through association with the established literary trade, Mr. Demarest secures American rights for good English works and a competitive chance at manuscripts from agents and authors. More personally, his long residence and work in Mexico will result this first year in three good books from across the border. More of the writers are western than usual with American publishing, even these years after the post-war literary hegira. Monsignor Culleton himself, for example, wrote the excellent *Key to the Apocalypse,* issued early in the year. Dom Damian, O.S.B., abbot of Mount Angel in Oregon, wrote the forthcoming *Search for Sanctity,* a compilation of contemporary spiritual case histories, many of which have been appearing in *St. Joseph Magazine* on the Coast. The Academy Library Guild not only affirms the value of books; it also promises to provide new books of new origin for the enrichment of general American publishing, and for genuinely valuable reading.

PHILIP BURNHAM.

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The Epic of St.-John Perse

by MARTIN TURNELL

"WE ARE a long way from Marcel Proust." When I first read it, this sentence from Claudel's essay on St.-John Perse's *Winds* carried my mind back many years. I was an undergraduate at Cambridge in 1930 when Perse was introduced to the English public by T. S. Eliot's translation of *Anabasis,* a poem which had first been published in French in 1924. It was the Cambridge of Professor G. E. Moore, the high priest of logical positivism, and Dr. I. A. Richards; the Cambridge of the controversy over poetry and beliefs; the Cambridge of *Practical Criticism,* for which I was one of the guinea pigs. We read Eliot and Hopkins, Baudelaire and Laforgue, Proust and Valéry. We did not read Claudel, who has been a major influence in the work of Perse.

A foreign poet who was presented by such an illustrious sponsor clearly could not be ignored, but I am bound to record that, in the skeptical, astringent atmosphere of the Cambridge of the end of the twenties, his reception was decidedly lukewarm. "It's nothing but Claudel," said a famous and respected teacher disparagingly. *Anabasis* was certainly a long way from Marcel Proust and the great masters of introspection who were our delight. It was perhaps even further from *Poems 1909-1925.* A generation accustomed to the Fisher King and his parched realm, to the gnomic utterances of parts of *The Waste Land* and the mental mountains of Hopkins' sonnets, found it difficult to grasp the significance of St.-John Perse's Conquistador, or to appreciate the vast open spaces of his Orient and the wide sweep of his prose poetry.

St.-John Perse, or to give him his real name, Alexis Saint-Léger Léger, drew largely on his personal experience for the imagery and color of his poem. He was born on the island of Saint-Léger-les-Feuilles, near Guadeloupe, in 1887. He went to France at the age of eleven, met Francis Jammes and Claudel while still a schoolboy, and was a student at the University of Bordeaux at the same time as Jacques Rivière who was to be the editor of the *Nouvelle Revue Française* during its finest period. He originally intended to become a doctor, but in 1914, possibly as a result of Claudel's example, he gave up medicine and entered the diplomatic service.

Like Claudel before him, he was posted to China and spent seven years in that country which was to provide his poetry with some of its most impressive imagery. He returned to France in 1921 and worked in the Asia Division of the French Foreign Office. He rose to the highest rank at the Quai d'Orsay, but was deprived of his civic rights and had his property confiscated by the Vichy Government in 1940. He made his way to the United States, worked for a time in the Library of Congress as consultant on French literature, and now seems to have settled permanently in America.

THE READER, said Eliot in his preface to *Anabasis,* "has to allow the images to fall into his memory successively without questioning the reasonableness of each at the moment; so that, at the end, a total effect is produced." It would be difficult to pack more sound advice on the way to tackle an undeniably obscure poet into one short sentence. Although Perse uses a very extensive and sometimes a highly technical vocabulary, he is essentially a creator of images. The only profitable way of approaching him is to read and re-read the text of his poems, allowing a pattern to form in our minds, picking out the salient images, observing the way in which they create the pattern.

It helps still further to realize that he is not merely the author of a number of separate poems, but of what the French are fond of calling an *oeuvre*—a "work" in the singular to distinguish it from the Anglo-Saxon "works." While the details necessarily vary from book to book, while the imagery shifts and changes and grows, what we are primarily concerned with is a single pattern, an immense tapestry, in which the principal images or themes are continually reappearing in different contexts and different surroundings.

One of Perse's earliest poems is called *Pictures for Crusoe.* The figure of Robinson Crusoe, which in some ways has had a greater impact on the French than on the Anglo-Saxon mind, at once introduces the theme of *exile* which can, without exaggeration, be described as the *leit-motif* of Perse's work. In *Anabasis,* which was his first major poem and which still seems to me to be his most impressive achievement, the theme of "exile" becomes interwoven with the theme of "con-

Mr. Turnell, a frequent contributor, is the author of *Baudelaire* and *The Novel in France.*

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quest." The central character is the Conquistador, arriving in an unknown land, founding a new city, giving it laws, providing it with an administration and then, when his work is completed, turning round in search of fresh fields to conquer. So we have the complex figure of the Conqueror-Exile-Stranger: the man who is an "exile" from his own land and a "stranger" in another which mysteriously he subdues. But the Conqueror-Exile, battling with natural difficulties, producing order and civilization out of a potentially rich but uncultivated and uncharted country, is also the Poet who is battling with language and molding it to the vision that he is pursuing.

THE THEME of exile acquires fresh overtones, a new significance, in the first full-length poem which he published after his arrival in the United States and to which he gave the title *Exile*. He is a poet who develops, but who never abandons anything in the process of development. To the images which were the fruit of the seven years in China, he added images which specifically reflect the landscape of primitive America and its transformation. We read in *Winds*, for example, of "The great expresses . . . strapped with white metal, like aging athletes."

Although the Poet-Exile remains the central figure, the concepts of "conquest" and "exile" are extended to embrace the armies of conqueror-exiles who colonized America: Spaniards, Protestants, Mormons and, said Claudel, "the scholars of today in their struggle—their direct struggle—with matter."

It will be apparent from what I have said that Perse is a poet on the heroic scale. Nothing indicates the epic nature of his undertaking more clearly than the titles of the poems of his American period: *Winds, Rains, Snows* and, the latest to be translated into English, *Seamarks* (Pantheon Books: Bollingen Series LXVII. Translated by Wallace Fowlie. $6.). It would be a simplification to assume that these poems simply record the struggle between man and the elements. Man does, indeed, do battle, but it is battle *with* rather than *against* the elements. For its aim is not "conquest" in any crude sense. It is positive and creative, an attempt to bring order and harmony out of the chaos of the "uncharted," the "uncultivated," the "unknown," and to achieve the final vision. The elements, as we are told very clearly in his new poem, are symbols of the forces of the universe.

"And of the Sea itself it will not be question, but of its reign in the heart of man."

The "Sea," which is given a capital letter and is the center of the poem, stands for forces which are present inside us:

"The Sea, *in us* bearing the silken sound of open seas and all the great freshness of good fortune throughout the world."

"The Sea, *woven in us,* to the last weaving of its tangled night, the Sea, *in us* weaving its great hours of light and its great trails of darkness. . . ."

In another sequence we read:

"The Sea, in celebration of its steps, like an ode of stone: vigil and celebration on our frontiers, murmur and celebration to the height of men. . . ."

The words "ceremony," "celebration," "festivities," "glory," "splendor," and "radiance" are frequently used by Perse. The repetition of the word "celebration" in these lines brings out the ritual, ceremonial element which is one of the most striking characteristics of his poetry. But the word "vigil" seems to introduce a religious nuance into the celebrations which reflects the way in which the emphasis always falls on the positive and creative forces of the universe. The religious element is reinforced by the poet's description of his work as "a great votive offering." He dwells on the fact that it is the fruit of prolonged meditation, and on his hope that it will turn out to be what Mallarmé used to call "the Great Work."

ALTHOUGH it is a commonplace of criticism that Perse's poetry is "aristocratic," I am not sure that the significance of the aristocratic element has been fully understood. It is not something extraneous, a mere matter of decoration and effect. The idea of hierarchy is central in his poetry. The forces of which I have spoken run all through his universe; the "battle" does not take place on a single level; it goes on simultaneously on a number of different levels. This explains the prevalence of ceremonial processions in the poetry, and shows how skillfully the themes of "poetry," "ceremonial" and "hierarchy" are blended:

"With her Princes, her Regents, her Messengers clothed in pomp and metal, her great Actors their eyes gouged out and her Prophets chained together, her women Magicians stamping on wooden clogs. . . ."

The aristocracy of blood, the "rulers," head the procession, and are followed by the Actors who stand here for art. Lower down in the hierarchy come the technicians and administrators, who are nevertheless an indispensable part of the scheme:

"Port officers conferred like frontier guards: agreements on toll-gates and watering places; settlements of limits and regulations for rights of way."

We all know that the sea is a symbol of the female principle, and Perse actually refers in the poem to the "lubricious" sea. A great deal of it is taken up with a violent love affair between the Poet and a Woman. It seems to represent the struggle between the male and female principles which repeats, in its own sphere, the general struggle between man and the elements, the poet and language, the administrators and regulations, the technicians and intractable natural obstructions.

The poem closes with a series of images of harmony

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or, to use the word on which the poet sets his personal stamp, "conciliation": "Cause gained, sea conciliated"; "The alliance is consummated, the collusion perfect": "O plenary Sea of alliance of discord!"; "She is a federal sea and sea of alliance." The key-figure, however, is "the pilot":

"The signal threshold of the greatest Age, when the pilot is discharged—Sea opening of the forbidden world. . . ."

The discharge of the pilot means that the "discord" between man and the Sea has been brought into harmony, but also that harmony reigns in all the other spheres. The "discord" which exists between the male and female principles disappears in the consummation of the love affair; that which exists between the poet and language is resolved in the conclusion of the poem, and in the dawning of the vision of "the forbidden world."

I HAVE suggested that *Anabasis* is still Perse's most impressive work. And that is true. A great deal of his poetry is written like Claudel's in what the French call the *verset,* which corresponds to "verse of the Bible." This form gives his poetry its freedom, richness and sweep. At the same time its very freedom is a temptation from which he does not altogether escape in his later work. He does not manage to avoid repetition or the creation of images for the sheer pleasure of creating them, whether they are necessary to the design of the poem or not.

If the work of the American period is inferior to *Anabasis* it is, frankly, because it is less dense and somewhat long-winded. Yet he remains a decidely impressive figure, and we must be grateful to the Bollingen Foundation for making still another of his works available to us in an excellent translation by Mr. Wallace Fowlie and in a lavishly produced edition.

BOOKS

The Ross Mystery—"Who Was Harold, What Was He?"

THE YEARS WITH ROSS. By James Thurber. Atlantic-Little, Brown. $5.00.

By GERALD WEALES

WHEN THE Thurber pieces that go to make up *The Years with Ross* first began to appear in the *Atlantic Monthly,* I assumed that the amorphous Harold Ross would finally be pinned down, be put on paper so clearly that an inquisitive outsider—even one as far out as I am—could come to understand the father of the *New Yorker.* After several months and installments, with Ross still a vague but busy figure in the magazine's pages, I assumed that the editor would not emerge until the pieces were all brought together in a single book where there need be no month's wait between settings, where one could walk all around the man in a few hours and come away with a likeness in depth. Now the book is at hand, but the great Harold Ross mystery is still unsolved. "Who Was Harold, What Was He?" asks Thurber in one of his chapter headings, but he plainly cannot answer the question for, as he says of Ross at the beginning of the book, "He won't sit still in anybody's mind long enough for a full-length portrait."

There are actually not one, but two unbelievable Rosses—the professional Ross and the personal Ross. The difficulty with the first is that it is so hard to believe that the hero of all the country-bumpkin anecdotes and the Philistine stories, in and out of the Thurber book, could have been the prime mover of the *New Yorker,* which, whatever its drawbacks, became under his hands one of the most literate magazines in the country. Ross comes out of these pages as a man who could not read poetry and chose not to read prose, except for *True Detective,* one on whom the most obvious literary allusion was lost, one who was so unimaginative that he questioned metaphors for their factual validity, one whose ear for the rhythm of a sentence was as likely to go wrong as it was to come right.

Thurber records his own obvious pleasure in Ross's good opinion of his work and quotes other *New Yorker* writers who treasure the editor's sentences of praise, but there are practically no stories that show that Ross had any critical judgment, no indication of why Ross's praise should be worth much. There is, in fact, the suggestion that Ross was sparing with his approbation except when he was trying to force an indolent author back to his typewriter. There is ample evidence—as in the account of how E. B. White forced Thurber's drawings on Ross—that the editor had to be talked into accepting contributors who later became staples of the magazine. The only extended example of editorial astuteness that Thurber includes is his re-printing of "Theory and Practice of Editing *New Yorker* Articles" and that remarkable document was written by Wolcott Gibbs, not Ross.

The reader is forced finally to one of two conclusions. Either Ross, for all his literary gaucheness, knew how to spot talent and so drew to himself the writers and artists who finally made the *New Yorker,* or he was a compulsive force whose energy drove the bandwagon onto which a cluster of homeless authors and cartoonists clambered. Thurber leans to the second view, for he says, "I think the moths deserve most of the credit for discovering the flame." In the end, Thurber can only insist that Ross was a great editor without showing the how, when and where of that still untold story.

Ross the man is as hard to accept as Ross the editor. Thurber's fondness for him is evident throughout the book, particularly in the

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moving pages about Ross's death, but although he makes clear that some people—many people apparently—loved Ross, he does not make the man likable. In many of the stories, Ross seems much less the lovable old curmudgeon than he does the bad-mannered ruffian. I can see a group of Ross's friends sitting around reminiscing, shaking their heads affectionately, taking turns at "Do you remember . . ." and under such conditions the anecdotes might become fond and foolish. In cold print, however, Ross's primness is vaguely creepy, his brusqueness sounds brutal, his naiveté becomes ignorance.

In his chapter on the friendship and feud of Ross and Alexander Woollcott, Thurber explains that he never fell under the fabled spell of the latter, although he occasionally came close enough for the legendary aura to spill over him. I understand just how Thurber feels. The Alexander Woollcott who comes through the collection of anecdotage about him appears to be a kind of androgynous monster, a tasteless dictator of taste, but Ross, I am afraid, does not come off much better. I went into *The Years with Ross* quite willing to be charmed by the hero, but although there are occasional endearing glimpses of him, I came out with the feeling that Thurber must still know something that he has failed to tell me. Actually the knowledge is only affection, and anyone with a friend who is still not housebroken knows how impossible a quality that is to communicate.

Thurber says in the Foreword to the book that he has no intention of writing a formal biography of Ross, that "the unity I have striven for, whether I have achieved it or not, is one of effect," by which he means that he has looked at several of the many faces of Ross and hopes that they all add up to one. I have already indicated that the man still seems to be missing. In place of a fully realized Ross there are a host of anecdotes, some of them funny, some of them just Rossiana, divided into categories: Ross and money, Ross and sex, Ross and artists. Thurber gets so involved in stories that often he relaxes and embraces the irrelevant, and his method is finally self-defeating; by the end of the book there are just a few too many anecdotes.

Now, having carped for four paragraphs, I would like to say that *The Years with Ross* is often fascinating, that one listens to most of the Ross stories with the same open-eared wonder that one gives to literary gossip heard in the flesh. What is more, many of the early chapters are full of the workings of the *New Yorker* in the precarious twenties, when a steady stream of editors marched through the offices of the infant weekly, and these chapters add up to a good informal history of the launching of the magazine.

There are, as well, many incidental virtues to *The Years with Ross;* it is just that with such an author and such a subject, I somehow expected a great deal more.

Panorama of Modern Life

LOVE AND MONEY. By Noel Clad. Random House. $4.95.

By CHARLES MONAGHAN

WHERE HERMAN WOUK makes his points in favor of "The American Way" with a pile driver and Archibald MacLeish attempts to make his with custard cream, Noel Clad, in his first novel, uses the tackhammer of a sensitive talent to fashion an entertaining defense of America and its pomps.

He accomplishes his task by giving us a panorama of American and European life from 1917 until after the second world war. Ironically, Mr. Clad's defense of America is pegged on the character of an immigrant from Alsace, Max Armand. Through the eyes of Armand or one of a dozen other characters related to him, we see the fall of the pre-First War order, the post-war German inflation, the roaring twenties, the rise of the movies, the stock market crash, the depression, World War II, and its aftermath in a changed society.

In a novel of numerous fine scenes, the finest occurs in the next-to-last chapter. In a post-war Congressional investigation of poorly constructed housing, two of the extreme types which American civilization has produced come face to face. One, eighty-two-year-old George Brace Cotter, is the personification of the nineteenth-century business ethic. The other, Congressman Brian McKenna, is the epitome of the pragmatic adaptiveness of the politician. The clash of Cotter's outspoken greed and McKenna's hypocritical defense of the Negro voter is presented in tight, brilliant dialogue.

It is between these two types that Max Armand falls. Although vitally interested in money, he does not suffer from Cotter's crass greed, and though he wants to get on in the world, he does not have McKenna's lack of principle. Armand is saved from their excesses by possessing a large dose of bourgeois probity.

This is a thesis novel and the thesis goes like this: Max Armand stands for America, land of money, since he is so interested in acquiring capital; if then, in his pursuit of money, Armand can retain integrity and a capacity for love, the acquisitive spirit of America can be justified; Armand succeeds in doing so; therefore, "The American Way" is vindicated. This thesis is more substantial than it sounds at first. The problem of honesty (truth) in a society based on the material is a key one. But Mr. Clad sidesteps the main issue. Armand's probity is strictly bourgeois. He is honest, he explains at one point, because it would affect his worth as a stock market adviser if he weren't. The metaphysical implications of truth in a materialistic world are never explored.

Nevertheless, this remains a distinguished first novel. For Mr. Clad knows how to write. His prose is clean and direct. He has an acute eye for characterization. But most of all, he has created a novel that

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is a model of unity. Mr. Clad is only thirty-five. Greater wisdom, we hope, may come to him with the years. But his mastery of the craft of the novel is so great that he must be greeted as a formidable new talent.

Summer Fare

THE THIRD CHOICE. By Elizabeth Janeway. Doubleday. $3.95.

By MARIAN SELDIN

ONE'S FIRST opinion of *The Third Choice,* formed in no small measure by the fact that its central characters are called Diana Belchamber and Lorraine de Koning, (who, to reinforce the impression, has a love affair with a doctor named Peter Savage), is that the novel is summer fiction for tired wives.

I think, though, that Miss Janeway meant it to be more, for she has, it would seem, gone to school to Virginia Woolf. Unfortunately, she seems also to have come away too soon. There is, for instance, the Woolfian technique of shading character by exposing it through different points of view. But in Mrs. Woolf's books a character's view of himself is modified, not denied, by the face he presents to others. The Mrs. Belchamber which emerges from her own journal is far too lovable and sophisticated to seem related to Mrs. Belchamber, the invalid, who has temper tantrums, frightens one doctor, infuriates another and nearly destroys the love that her niece, Lorraine, has for her. And her last-chapter repentance doesn't really square the two views either.

Again, though it is quite to be expected that Lorraine is shocked at her cold, calculating, domineering, businessman husband's reaction to her request for a divorce, the reader oughtn't to be. Something should have prepared us for his attempted suicide. For we are supposed to be in on the secret of his twisted personality.

Nor is one invited to serious reflection by the theme: when a disaster so shatters our souls we are unable "to turn back, unable to see ahead—still somehow [we] devise the impossible third choice which will allow life to go on living us." But the choices the plot provides are so nearly inevitable they hardly merit the name.

However, the book is written with a measure of expertise both in plotting and in style sufficient to obscure, at least temporarily, its flaws in characterization; sufficient, too, to make the casual reader overlook its potpourri of forms. A journal, dramatic action seen through the limited point of view of one or other of the characters *and* the epistolary approach sum up entirely too much literary history for just one medium-sized novel. Which, of course, carries us quite away from Virginia Woolf.

The Life and World of J. M. Synge

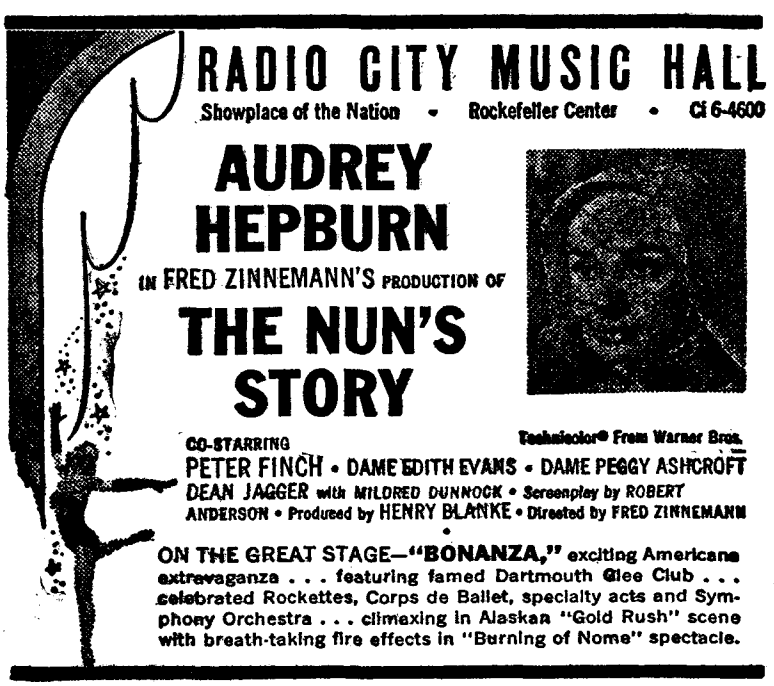
J. M. SYNGE: 1871-1909. By David H. Greene and Edward M. Stephens. Macmillan. $6.95.

By MAX COSMAN

ACCORDING to his birth, Synge might have led the life of an upper-middle class Protestant in Ireland at the end of the nineteenth century. All he had to do was to accept the class materialism, evangelical piety, loyalty to England, and conviction that the existing social science—gentry at the head of things and others at the foot—was the best of possible arrangements.

Such acceptance, however, exercised no more charm for him than cognate ones did for fellow Irishmen like George Moore, James Joyce, or George Bernard Shaw. He was unhappy about the tenant-evicting activities of his brother Edward. Unlike Samuel, another brother, he not only did not take orders, he even put the church aside as having no pertinence for him. As if this were not bad enough, he went in for questionable commitments. For one, he studied music as if concertizing on the fiddle were a profession for a gentleman. For another, when his musical career failed—inordinate shyness made it impossible for him to face an audience—he tied himself up with those alarming fellows, the Irish nationalists.

Actually, however, as is made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clear by Mr. Greene (Edward Stephens' credit as co-author is mainly honorific), Synge was not cut out for ideological conflict. Such love of violence as he had found its way into literature, not politics. The result was that he soon left Maud Gonne and her Irish League for a place in the circle revolving about W. B. Yeats. In this seminal group he found an audience. And when at Yeats' suggestion he went to the Aran Islands, he discovered, as the world now knows, both his great inspiration and his subject matter.

Mr. Greene's reportage is no less adequate for the later portion of his subject's life. While it details Synge's continued studies, his managerial interests in the Abbey Theatre, and, on the purely human side, his medley of ill health and unconsummated love, it also shows how the respective maneuverings of such people as Lady Gregory, Miss Hornihan, the Fays, the Allgoods and, of course, Yeats, nevertheless had a part in his work, which, as Mr. Greene puts it, "more than that of any of his contemporaries comes closer to achieving the assimilation of the Gaelic past which the Irish Renaissance stood for."

Occasionally the account warms up. The riotous reception given to "The Playboy of the Western World" is a case in point. Repeatedly too there are ironies that cry out for explication. What are we to make of this one? When Synge is notified that his mother is dead, he decides not to face the funeral. His excuse?—bad health and, as afterthought, his distance from the scene. And yet, shortly after, he writes to Molly Allgood: "I cannot tell you how unspeakably sacred her memory seems to me."

This ambivalence, cropping up more than once, reminds us again that the biography of objective presentation ("pure biography" in Sir Harold Nicolson's phrase), praiseworthy as is its tact and its record of "the deeds of a man's lifetime," is inescapably limited. In not going beyond the fact, that is, in sticking to the document and so preferring meagerness to intuition's fulness, it in effect divorces itself from

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much of the inner world of a human being.

Consider again Mrs. Synge and J. M. Synge. Seen outwardly she is an unprescient mother and he a contumacious son. But surely there is more to them than that. Viewed, for example, in terms of psychic conflict—she as the keeper of the house, the maintainer of the status quo, and he as the inevitably intransigent son—much that seems blurred between them comes into focus. And this insight helps clarify, for example, his consorting with tinkers and vagabonds, his evolving of a speech to catch the earthiness and the passion of those in cot and glen, and, most symptomatic, his wish to marry someone as different from a lady of a Big House as can be; to wit, a Molly Allgood, Roman Catholic, "former department-store salesgirl," bright, untutored, an actress.

Does this mean that though we admire Mr. Greene's achievement we look forward to still another kind of life-rendition? It does. We are thinking of the biography of identification or, if you will, the biography of engagement. Which is to say, biography that has Lytton Strachey's verve and the personalized perceptiveness of André Maurois.

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FOR THE FIRST time in history the U.S.A. has produced a group of painters who have achieved a position of prominence on the international scene. Whatever the ultimate value of their paintings, and whether they arouse admiration or dislike at home or abroad, this is an achievement that should do more than merely flatter our national self-esteem. It must be a solid source of encouragement to our artists and a valuable addition to our culture.

The Musem of Modern Art in N.Y., which has played an important role in creating a receptive American audience for this group of painters, is now presenting (through September 8) an exhibition of their work. The exhibition was organized by the Museum's International Program in response to requests from abroad for an exhibition of "abstract expressionism" in America, and it has been shown in eight European countries during the past year.

These "Abstract Expressionists," a large group of whom are also called "Action Painters," present a painted world that, for all its abstraction, is filled with the vitality and emotion of color and of large, free and bold gestures. Their abstraction is not purist (in fact, occasionally a recognizable image seems to peek out of the exuberant dashes of paint) but is, rather, means to an end, the end being the communication of an emotional statement. These painters seem collectively to have been seized with a sense of the mystery behind the universe of real objects, and they desire simply to communicate their emotion about and sense of this mystery through a free handling of paint in elusive or abstract forms, bold line and vibrant color.

The spontaneous and intensely personal method of painting that these artists have embraced as their esthetic gives them a strong individuality despite the unsystematic or seemingly formless character of their approach. Each has developed a style of his own in making his emotional statements, and furthermore those statements (despite the bold freedom of their terms) are coherent. "Paintings, like miracles, possess an inner logic" says Tomlin, "it is not the logic of everyday, it is a self-generating logic, an organic logic." And these paintings, have, I believe, this logic. The powerful black slashes on white with which Kline paints *The Chief,* for instance, are perfectly authoritative and complete, although they have all the look of having been flung on the canvas in a frenzy. The huge painting by Pollack (perhaps the most famous of these paintings) entitled *No. 12* is like a large map of chaos made up of bright color patches with bold black splotches and a labyrinthian coil of lines in relief—somehow it is a *complete* map of chaos. The verve and dash of DeKooning's marvelous technique is a virtuoso-like performance that takes your breath away, but it is held tightly together by a dynamic coherence that gives his paintings (such as *Woman I*) a single impact.

The painters just mentioned are perhaps the "action painters" par excellence. Baziotes, who speaks of "a phantom that must be caught and made real," illustrates his statement in *The Dwarf,* for example, with opalescent color and rather Klee-like line. Motherwell, who says that "without ethical consciousness a painter is only a decorator," makes his statement in large, explicit calligraphic forms: *Elegy For The Spanish Republic* is eloquent and elegiac. Sam Francis paints huge pictures of amoeba-like patterns of dark tones lit by brilliant color; the paint drips, giving the surface that "intense activism" typical of this school, while the huge pattern, as in *Big Red,* establishes a monumental order. James Brooks creates lyrical effects of color with free diagonal brush strokes building up fluent compositions such as *Jackson,* while Adolph Gottlieb's statements are staccatto, in splashes of colors arranged in bars and blots. Grace Hartigan and Theodore Sta-

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mos are the younger artists represented here, and display a splendid élan all their own; Hartigan's color is vibrant in firmly handled compositions and Stamos reveals a moving sensibility in lovely illumined colors and off-beat sorts of patterns.

At the opposite end of the scale among these abstract expressionists is Mark Rothko, whose statements have a hieratic style: the forms are simplified to rectangles of color that carry the burden of feeling in their resonant luminosity. Clifford Still, with his broad somber areas pierced with islands of jeweled color, and Newman, with his geometric schemes, are also in this less "active" camp.

Philip Guston has a place somewhat apart: his fresh delicate color combined with his small brushstrokes have caused him to be called "an abstract impressionist"; *Painting 1954* presents a dappled rosy splash of color on a delicately modulated ground. Archile Gorky, who was very important as the inspirer of this movement, in which painters strive to "embody rather than illustrate their themes" (Sam Hunter), is unique in his pale, allusive compositions with their musically disposed line and occasional spots of color.

All in all, this show is an exhilirating revelation of talent in America. It presents a dynamic new esthetic that carries conviction in a variety of expressive styles. It also evokes a variety of responses. The catalogue notes that in Italy its "festive pictorial quality" was noted; in Spain, its "spirituality"; in France, Germany and England it was the "adventurousness" of the new American painting that chiefly struck the reviewers. To Americans it seems as if the overwhelming impression must be one of vital achievement, and the general responses must be a delightful salute to these festive and adventurous spirits.

(A very interesting, even fascinating essay on the subject of the "new American painting" is Sam Hunter's chapter on the U.S.A. in a handsome new book called *Art Since 1945*, Thames & Hudson, Ltd.)

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